The social museum in the Caribbean : grassroots heritage initiatives and community engagement

Ariese, C.E.

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Author: Ariese, C.E.
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Methodological Framework

I treat museum visits as events that include various individuals and spoken exchanges as well as objects, displays, and buildings.
Fiona Candlin (2016: 17)

The museological literature abounds with examples of studies of visitors in museums, as well as guides and toolkits for museum professionals wishing to develop evaluations of their museum, exhibitions, or programs. There is a wealth of methods for those interested in understanding visitors and evaluating their museum experiences, from demographics and focus groups, to heat mapping and personal meaning mapping (Davidson 2015). Visitor studies methods fall short, however, for those community members who may be affected by the museum but who have chosen not to visit the museum. And although some studies have focused on assessing the experiences of (usually external) people involved in museum projects, there is still relatively little emphasis on evaluating the involvement of museum staff. In addition, limited resources exist for those who want to be a museum visitor and conduct a critical museum visit. Such a review is often the domain of museum studies students, who are provided with checklists of museum aspects which they can consider during their visit (*e.g.* for Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester: Kavanagh 1994). While these checklists are certainly useful, they fragment the museum visit into isolated categories such as building, governing bodies, or displays. In consideration of these limitations, this research project necessitated the development of a unique methodology which borrows and combines approaches from museum studies, visitor studies, and anthropology. A combination of these approaches made it possible to gather data about museums, their staff, and their visitors from museum visits. Additionally, a different combination of methodologies from these fields supported the development of the case studies research, enabling the collection of data related to the perceptions of participants in community engagement processes. Although Fiona Candlin's *Micromuseology* (2016) was not published until after this project's fieldwork was completed, her approach of holistically treating the museum visit as an event is similar to the methodology used in the regional museum survey.

This chapter will describe and critically consider the methodology developed for this research project. Firstly, it will show how I designed an approach aimed to tackle the main research question of this dissertation. This approach identified the main areas that required research, which directed the research to take place on both a macro and

a micro level, and thus informed the development of the sub questions. Secondly, the specific methodology for the macro level research is explained in detail. This part of the study was a regional museum survey throughout the greater Caribbean and included visits to 195 museums in 25 different islands or countries. Thirdly, the micro level methodology is introduced, which focused on two particular case studies: the *Kalinago Barana Autê* in Dominica and the *Bengal to Barbados* exhibition project in Barbados. Finally, a section on research ethos is included to familiarize the reader with the general attitudes and philosophies, as well as codes of conduct, which guided fieldwork and all other aspects of this research project.

Research Approach

To consider the overall research approach, let's revisit the main research question (see *Research Questions and Objectives*, page 18): *How are Caribbean museums realigning their societal role in relation to contemporary Caribbean communities?* In order to begin to find an answer to this question, we step back to the theoretical framework of this dissertation and place ourselves again in the mindset of the New Museology. The question is framed with a knowledge of 'museums' and 'communities' as was defined in the previous chapter which allows for a broad definition of the concept of the museum and a fluid, heterogeneous understanding of communities. From this New Museology perspective, community engagement forms the key to answering the research question. How, then, do we reach these answers? Fundamentally, an understanding of museums in the Caribbean is crucial in order to begin to comprehend their societal role and how this may have changed or still be changing. Once this picture has crystallized, a deeper consideration is necessary of how Caribbean museums adopt and apply community engagement. This can be achieved by looking on the one hand at participatory practices – *what* museums are doing to engage with communities, or vice versa – and on the other hand at community engagement processes – *how* such engagement takes place. So, how are Caribbean museums realigning their societal role in relation to contemporary Caribbean communities? By adopting participatory practices and undertaking community engagement processes.

Through this research approach, the answers to the main research question can be identified in terms of either *practices* or *processes*. This separation into either product or procedure led the research design to require two levels: macro and micro. A macro level approach is suitable to collect a broad sample of participatory practices. On the other hand, a micro level approach is appropriate to understand community engagement processes deeply. A very broad but relatively shallow study of participatory practices is thus complemented by a very deep but relatively narrow investigation of community engagement processes. Together, these two levels form a more comprehensive understanding of community engagement in Caribbean museums. To collect data on both levels, different studies were needed with their own methods, requiring a unique mix of museological and anthropological techniques. Developing a suitable mixed methods toolkit was particularly important in order to conduct this combined macro and micro study in the span of a PhD research project.

Macro level research took the form of a regional survey of Caribbean museums and their participatory practices, taking place over the course of multiple fieldwork

sessions in 2013-2016. To my knowledge, this was the first Caribbean study of community engagement to include museums from all four linguistic areas. Not only is it a unique study in this regard, but it is also notable for encompassing museums of a wide variety of types of content, and for including grassroots and private museums as well as governmental institutions. As mentioned above, the study was able to include 195 museums in 25 different islands or countries, thereby reflecting the broad diversity of museums which can be found in the region. This macro level research gathered basic information about each museum, but also particularly focused on the participatory practices that were present in each. The next section of this chapter contains a more detailed description of the methodology of this regional survey, including which museums were visited, what data was collected, how this data was collected, and how analysis and interpretation were undertaken.

Micro level research was conducted in the form of two in depth case studies of ongoing community engagement processes. The case study in Dominica consisted of three separate visits (March 2015, July-August 2015, and March 2016), and the case study in Barbados of two (October 2015, and February-March 2016). Each case study consisted of three phases: exploratory visit, main case study research, and presentation of results. The macro level regional survey of Caribbean museums provided the setting for the exploratory visit in both cases, enabling the visitation of the museums in question and offering opportunities to meet with persons involved in the ongoing or developing community engagement process. Upon invitation from these persons, case study research was planned and conducted, in the form of interviews, participant observation, and community surveys. Again in both cases, I presented results of the study to community members for discussion and feedback as a final follow up. A more detailed description of the case study approach is found further on in this chapter, while the methods which were particular to each case can be found in the individual case study chapters.

By defining the research according to this macro and micro level, it was possible to finalize the sub questions. The first of these asks what participatory practices are and what the intended outcomes are of community engagement processes. This question has already been tackled on a theoretical level in Chapter 2. The second question concerns the characteristics of contemporary Caribbean museums and how they adopt participatory practices. This question relates to the macro level approach, and is answered through the regional survey, the results of which are presented in Chapter 4. The third question wonders how Caribbean communities perceive community engagement processes. Naturally, this question is directed at the micro level and is answered by the two case studies, which can be found in Chapters 5 & 6. Finally, the last question relates to how these community engagement practices and processes affect the societal role of Caribbean museums. This complex question is tackled in Chapter 7 in a discussion from multiple angles which provides a series of answers. Finally, a mosaic answer to the main research question is illustrated in Chapter 8.

Regional Museum Survey

The regional museum survey provided the framework for the collection of the macro level research data. Fieldwork was the central component of this data collection,

requiring extensive preparation beforehand and detailed data management, analysis, and interpretation afterwards. Fieldwork was conducted throughout almost the entire span of the four year research project, beginning in October 2013 and ending in October 2016. Fieldwork sessions took two different forms: externally-organized visits and self-organized visits. The former were those instances where I was in the Caribbean for a conference or other event, which included scheduled site visits to museums or field trips to heritage sites. In these cases, the selection of museums had been determined by others than myself, thus influencing the sample and sample size. Self-organized visits led to the majority of data collected and as I planned these visits, the included museums were selected based on my criteria. The primary difference between the externally-organized and self-organized visits is thus the selection of museums, while the data collection methods were the same.

The main goal of the regional museum survey was to get a broad impression of museums in the Caribbean and their participatory practices. It was understood that in order to grasp this diversity, it would not suffice to visit only one or two islands. Instead, I determined that it would be necessary to visit at the very least one island or country from each of the four linguistic areas: the Dutch-, English-, French- and Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Besides allowing for a linguistic diversity, the research was designed to include both the Greater and the Lesser Antilles, as well as mainland countries in Central and South America. Due to time constraints and research feasibility, it was not possible to visit every island and country in the Caribbean region. Thus, unfortunately, it was necessary to be selective. The selection of islands and countries was mainly determined based on the parameters above, thus ensuring the inclusion of all linguistic areas and geographic sub-regions. Those islands and countries which were ultimately not included in this research remain valuable areas for future museological research which may expand the image of Caribbean museums developed in this work. Of particular note is Cuba with its Cuban Museum Network which consisted of 328 institutions in 2013 (Linares 2013: 66). Visiting a representative sample of Cuban museums was not feasible in the course of this research project, but the history and evolution of Cuban museums has been thoroughly researched by others such as Marta Arjona Pérez (Arjona *et al.* 1982), José Linares (2013), and Jorge Rolando García Perdigón (2014).

Ultimately, in the course of externally-organized visits, fieldwork was conducted in: Belize, French Guiana, Suriname (2013); Barbados, St. Lucia (2015); and Grand Cayman (2016). These six island or countries correspond to 32 of the museums visited. In the form of self-organized visits, fieldwork took place in: Anguilla, Aruba, Carriacou, Curaçao, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Barthélemy, St. Maarten, St. Martin (2014); Bequia, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Marie-Galante, Martinique, Puerto Rico, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Trinidad (2015) (see figure 3). In these 19 islands or countries, 163 museums were visited. An index of all the museums visited can be found in the appendix (see *Index: Caribbean Museums Database*, page 251).

In order to ensure the inclusion of a broad sample of Caribbean museums and their participatory practices, it was equally important to not limit the fieldwork to certain types of museums. This was aided by the development in the field of a broad working definition of museums, namely that a museum is a space for tangible or intangible heritage, which provides opportunities for knowledge transfer, and is open to

Figure 3: Map of the islands and countries in the Caribbean where fieldwork was conducted.

the public (see *Defining The Museum*, page 33). By applying this definition, it was possible to include museums of all types of content, all sizes, all models of ownership, and regardless of visitation numbers or associated communities. Indeed, in order to be able to gain a broad understanding of participatory practices, the selection of museums was not directed towards any specific types of communities.

To be able to plan fieldwork, the first step was to identify the existing museums in any given place. In this regard, the Museums Association of the Caribbean (MAC) was an unparalleled resource. Its directories of museums in the Caribbean (Museums Association of the Caribbean 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2011d) provided a starting point for research, which was complemented by information from well-known travel guide books, online travel reviews, tourism websites, and museum websites. Additionally, the development of a contact network of persons working in or with museums in the region was crucial to verify the existence of museums, to schedule meetings with museum staff, or to plan visits to museums which were temporarily closed to the public due to refurbishment or still under construction. MAC's annual conference, in which I participated every year (2013-2017), was instrumental for developing and maintaining this vital contact network. Finally, while a primary selection of museums to visit was always made before any given fieldwork session – along with a preliminary schedule – this was frequently adjusted in the field as flyers or other information became available.

In the course of these self-organized visits, the selection of museums visited in any island or country differed greatly. Particularly in some of the smaller places, the selection can be considered comprehensive in the sense that all known museums were visited. In other places, especially those where the existence of many museums was known beforehand, the selection was not exhaustive. Ultimately, decisions were

made firstly based on the determination to include a wide range of museum types and secondly on practical matters related to the itinerary and scheduled meetings. Time was always set aside to visit a wide range of museums in the capital city, in combination with trips beyond the capital. On the whole, though, the selection cannot be deemed complete. Nonetheless, it does intend to cover a broad spectrum of museum types throughout the region and aims to be representative of the diversity of museums in each island or country.

Preparation for fieldwork was very important, particularly for efficiently navigating through islands and countries so as to visit a broad selection of museums in the available time, while maintaining a thorough fieldwork methodology. To support this, extensive preparation went into understanding the locations of museums, how to best get around, and when museums were expected to be open. For every fieldwork session, a list of possible museums to visit was prepared with contact information and opening hours. This list was used to map out the museums in the island or country and to plan an itinerary. When museums were located closely together, for instance in a city center, multiple could be visited in one day. Other visits required a full day if the museum was very large or if island hopping was required to reach them. Finally, the list and map formed the basis for a draft daily schedule. Sundays proved to be the most difficult day for fieldwork due to museums not being open and public transport often being very limited. Having prepared all this information before entering the field provided possibilities for flexibility and adjustments when needed, for instance when a museum turned out to be incidentally or unexpectedly closed,[7] or when new visits warranted addition to the schedule.

Despite the importance of preparation, there is no substitute for the event of the museum visit. It is never wholly possible to understand the museum from a distance – a researcher must experience the museum, its objects, and participate in exchanges with staff and visitors personally in order to gain a full, holistic understanding. This is particularly necessary so as to grasp how the official images and representations of the museum may differ from reality on the ground. Thus, museum visits were approached not only analytically but also experientially and to some extent subjectively. In this sense, the methodology shared some similarities with that of phenomenology, which in archaeology, for instance, has been employed to use sensory experiences to interpret cultural landscapes (Tilley 1994). For much of the fieldwork sessions, I began the museum visit in the capacity of a regular tourist and the research purpose of the visit was not immediately revealed. This allowed for interactions with staff and visitors to occur as they might with any other visitor to the museum. When permitted, the museum, its surroundings, displays, and labels were extensively photographed, enabling the collection of a visual record of the museum. GPS coordinates of the museum were saved. Usually at the end of the visit, when the museum had been wholly explored and experienced, I would approach museum staff with some questions, making sure to reveal the purpose of these questions for this research. At this point, a business card

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7   For instance, a museum might be incidentally closed for a staff training (*Museo de San Juan*, Puerto Rico) or due to a power outage (*Liberty Hall*, Jamaica). Unexpected closure might be temporary, due to the owner being on maternity leave (*Sur la Trace des Arawaks*, St. Martin), or permanent (*Musée L'Herminier*, Guadeloupe).

would always be given to enable staff to contact me directly with any questions or to redact any information. On some occasions, these exchanges would expand the regular museum visit, for instance by providing a tour of the museum collections or storage areas. The nature of museum visits was also different in those cases where meetings had already been arranged beforehand with staff. Oftentimes the meeting would frame the following museum visit, which was frequently guided by the staff member.

By approaching the museum visit as an event, data collected in the field consisted primarily of photographs and field notes. As mentioned, photographs were collected whenever possible and permitted of all aspects of the museum. In addition, while in the field, daily field notes were written in order to reflect on the museum visits and all the personal encounters and meetings. Along with leaflets, flyers, and online museum resources, these c. 9500 photographs and field notes (c. 91000 words or 164 pages) formed the core data of the regional museum survey. In order to be able to analyze and interpret this abundance of data, and to discover trends, similarities, and differences, it was decided to develop a database.

The methodology of seeing the museum visit as an event has implications for the temporality of the collected data. Most museums were visited on a single occasion, and the data collected and the corresponding database entries thus reflect a specific moment in time. Even if further information was obtained through flyers, museum websites, or visitors' reviews, the single visit formed the core of the collected data. The reader should note that the database cannot reflect a permanent perspective of museums in the Caribbean, just as it cannot contain a total representation. I am already aware of museums that have been closed since visiting, others which have opened, and yet others which have been altered or damaged. In a region with on the one hand considerable construction and development, particularly under the influence of the tourism industry, and on the other hand significant environmental changes, the museum scene is in constant flux. Hurricanes Irma and Maria were particularly destructive and impacted many museums and collections in their wake in 2017.

At this point, it should be reiterated that fieldwork was supported tremendously by many people who assisted or accompanied me on museum visits, or provided information or access. Members of the Museums Association of the Caribbean and its conference delegates were pivotal in providing information and access to museums, as well as offering feedback on the research in progress. The role of the staff at all museums visited deserves deep appreciation, first and foremost for their museum work, and secondly for their research assistance. Finally, twenty colleagues (from the NEXUS1492 research project, associated HERA-CARIB and NWO Island Networks projects, and affiliated researchers) accompanied me on one or more museum visits, sharing their experiences. Arlene Álvarez and John Angus Martin, in the Dominican Republic and Grenada respectively, provided access to their institutions, introductions to others, and fieldwork collaboration. Particular mention and appreciation is due to Mariana de Campos Françozo who collaborated in multiple fieldwork sessions and thus provided a wealth of additional insights.

As mentioned, a database was designed for the regional museum survey which was filled in following every fieldwork session. The entry form consists of two sections: the first concerning the museum, its exhibitions, and its participatory elements, the second regarding the museum's collection of Amerindian archaeological artefacts. This

second section was designed specifically for use by NEXUS1492 colleagues who were working with Amerindian archaeological collections in European museums (Françozo & Strecker 2017). The two sections had been designed so that both these museological studies could use the same database, although with different data and research aims. The use of the same database structure enabled further collaboration in the analysis and visualization of the two datasets (van Garderen 2018). For this study, whenever relevant and applicable, the second section was filled out with data from the regional museum survey. However, most entries only contain information in the first section of the form. The fields in this first section will be discussed shortly and can be viewed in a slightly condensed version of a blank entry form (see figure 4).

The database entry form begins with basic information of the museum for anyone wishing to also visit the museum. Here one can find the name of the museum, visiting address and GPS coordinates, phone number, website, the name of a contact person, and the opening hours. The field for the entry price reflects the standard fee for a non-local adult. The year in which the museum was first opened to the public is included, as well as its current system of ownership. An indication of the size of the museum is made by a rough estimation of how long an average visit to the museum would take, less than half an hour (small), more than an hour (large), or in between (medium). The languages in which museum labels, guided tours, or audio tours are available is also noted. A photograph of the façade of the museum, as well as a photograph of the inside (when permitted) are embedded directly into the form. This first section also contains information regarding the event of the museum visit as experienced by myself: when this took place, which colleagues, if any, accompanied me, and what the status of the museum was when visiting, *e.g.* open, closed temporarily, still under construction, or closed permanently. A longer field is included for comments, which contains a descriptive account of the museum visit, summarizing my field notes.

The database entry form's first section contains two larger fields with checkboxes: one regarding the contents of the museum and its displays (as visible to the public) and one concerning the participatory elements which were present or evidence of which was observable at the time of the museum visit. The meaning of the categories in the 'content' checkboxes is presented briefly (see table 1). Some of these categories overlap in some areas and are not rigidly defined. It should be noted that it does not only cover the content of the museum, but also refers in some cases to its characteristics, for instance the type of building in which it is housed. A definition or explanation of the 'participatory elements' checkboxes can be found in Chapter 4, where each participatory practice is separately presented along with examples from the field.

As mentioned previously, an index of the museums included in the regional museum survey and thus in the Caribbean Museums Database is included in the appendix (see *Index: Caribbean Museums Database*, page 251). The full Caribbean Museums Database, which contains the complete entries of all of these museums, totaling 600 pages, is accessible online as a resource accompanying this dissertation. Although not intended to function as a stand-alone publication, it provides access to the data collected in the course of this research. As such, it is not the intention to expand or alter the database in this format, merely to provide readers with the opportunity to consult the database, much of which could not be fully discussed in the course of this dissertation. The temporality of the data, due to the fieldwork methodology by which

most museums' data was collected during a single visit, may have implications for the comprehensiveness and correctness of the data.

Following the completion of the database, and in order to make comparison and analysis of these 195 museums more feasible and useful, the characterization of museums was reconsidered by assessing two of the fields and condensing their categories. Firstly, 'ownership' as originally designed for the database contained seven categories: governmental, grassroots (individual), grassroots (community), NGO, private, mixed public and private, and unknown. This was reduced to five categories: governmental, grassroots, private, mixed ownership, and unknown. This was achieved by simply grouping the museums from the three categories grassroots (individual), grassroots (community), and NGO into one. More difficult was condensing the 'content' categories, as many of these are not necessarily collapsible into a larger category. It was decided to develop a new categorization of seven museum types: archaeology, art, built heritage, history, mixed content, nature/science, and popular culture. Each museum was reviewed in order to determine which category most predominantly characterizes the museum as a whole. Those museums which were characterized similarly strongly by two or more of these types, were designated 'mixed content' museums.

Nonetheless, visualization, analysis, and interpretation remained complex. Thus, a collaboration was developed with NEXUS1492 colleague and computer scientist Mereke van Garderen who is a specialist in information visualization (van Garderen 2018). Firstly, this collaboration aimed to develop a map of museums included in the regional museum survey and Caribbean Museums Database. This was a complex task, as the geographic layout of the region in its characteristic string of islands makes it difficult to represent such a heterogeneous distribution of information without words or symbols overlapping. In order to tackle this challenge, Van Garderen developed a method which is based on an overlap removal algorithm[8] (van Garderen *et al.* 2016; van Garderen *et al.* 2017). This enabled the visualization of the entire dataset, including all the museums on smaller islands, by making sure the symbols for the museums did not overlap, but were still placed in the approximate vicinity of their actual location. To symbolize the museums, Van Garderen designed glyphs which could simultaneously visually represent museums by both type (glyph color) and by ownership (glyph shape). By processing the data and running scripts to generate these maps digitally, it was possible to develop a map showing all the museums, but also to generate maps per museum type or per museum ownership category (see figures 44-49).

Secondly, following on the development of the maps, the collaboration continued with cross tabulations for multiple variables, enabling a visualization of the absolute number of co-occurrences, for instance by museum type and ownership together. These cross tabulations are useful for visualizing how many museums of a certain type are present per island/country, or how many of them are grassroots museums or governmental museums (see figures 53-56). Cross tabulations were also designed to see whether there was any difference in museum types or ownership when museums were grouped according to the four linguistic areas.

Thirdly, the collaboration investigated the participatory practices as they are employed by Caribbean museums. A cross tabulation of participatory practices by museum

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8   To be more exact, a minimum-displacement overlap removal with orthogonal ordering constraints.

Figure 4: Fields from the database constructed for the regional museum survey, with clarifications.

Category	Meaning
Amerindian	Relating to the Amerindian population of the Caribbean region.
Antiques	Objects from 'grandmother's era' c. 40-100 years old.
Archaeology	Relating to archaeology from any era/culture.
Architecture	Relating to noteworthy architecture or structural design.
Art	Artworks, whether historical or contemporary, in any medium.
Distillery	A distillery is part of the museum.
Ethnography	Objects or intangible heritage from non-historically-distant cultures.
Factory	A factory is part of the museum.
Geology	Relating to geology.
History	Relating broadly to history, whether local or global.
Intangible heritage	Intangible heritage is included in the museum.
Maritime	Relating to maritime heritage.
Military	Relating to military heritage.
Nature/biology/flora	Natural heritage, biology, or flora is included in the museum.
Numismatics	Relating to numismatics, currency.
Period rooms	Rooms are decorated with objects to represent a past era.
Plantation	A plantation is part of the museum.
Politics/revolt	Relating to politics and revolt or resistance.
Popular culture	Relating to popular culture, *e.g.* food, music, dance, drink.
Reconstructions	Replicas or reconstructions of objects/structures are included.
Religion	Relating to any religion.
Ruins/historic buildings	The museum is located in, or encompasses ruins or historic buildings.
Science	Relating to any of the natural sciences.
Shop	A shop is a prominent aspect of the museum.
Slavery	Relating to slavery and the abolition of slavery.
Sports	Relating to sports.
Telecom	Relating to telecommunication technologies.
World Heritage Site	The museum is designated World Heritage.

Table 1: Meaning of the categories in the 'content' field of the Caribbean Museums Database.

type, ownership, or linguistic area did not reveal much detail, as some categories are overrepresented while others are underrepresented. For this reason, it was decided to develop visualizations based on the relative frequencies of participatory practices (see figures 50-52). These visualizations are able to show which percentage of museums of a certain type employ a particular participatory practices.

Finally, to aid analysis, matrices were developed which showcase the participatory practices per individual museum. Essentially, this data is directly available in the Caribbean Museum Database and its 'participatory elements' field. However, in order to see if there were any patterns, it was useful to view the participatory practices of all the museums in one glance (see figure 5).

The outcomes of the analysis and interpretations of the data and the visualizations can be found in the remainder of this dissertation. The Caribbean Museums Database forms the core of Chapter 4 which showcases the twelve participatory practices identified in Caribbean museums along with ample examples of each. The computer science collaboration and resulting analysis and interpretation are discussed in detail in Chapter 7 and the visualizations are included as figures 44-56.

Case Studies

The two case studies provided the framework in which the micro level research data was collected. Again, fieldwork was a major component of this data collection, requiring collaborative preparation beforehand as well as data management, coding of qualitative data, and descriptive statistical analysis afterwards. Case study fieldwork was conducted 2015-2016, and, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, it involved three phases: exploratory visit, main study, presentation of results. The main study phase was where the majority of the data was collected through a combination of interviews, participant observation, and community surveys.

The main goal of the case studies was to gain an in depth understanding of how community engagement processes happen and develop in Caribbean museums. As the regional museum survey had revealed a prevalence of grassroots initiatives in the Caribbean, and as they are relatively understudied in favor of governmental initiatives, it was decided that the case studies should focus on such grassroots initiatives. Following this decision, a number of parameters were developed for the case studies. Firstly, the aim would be to research two different types of community engagement processes, with different kinds of museums involved. Secondly, it was the intention to work with communities who are minority populations within their respective island or country and as such are characteristic for the diversity of Caribbean societies. This was noted as an important parameter also because some Caribbean museums had been critiqued for marginalizing communities of non-African descent (Farmer 2013). Thirdly, to be able to investigate different stages of community engagement processes, it was suggested to include both a newly started and an already ongoing community engagement project. Finally, noting the available time frame in which the case studies could be conducted, and the need to develop an in depth understanding of community perceptions, feasibility was a crucial parameter. This meant that any case study would need to allow a concise research question which it would be possible to answer by means of rapid assessment methods. Participatory rapid assessment requires
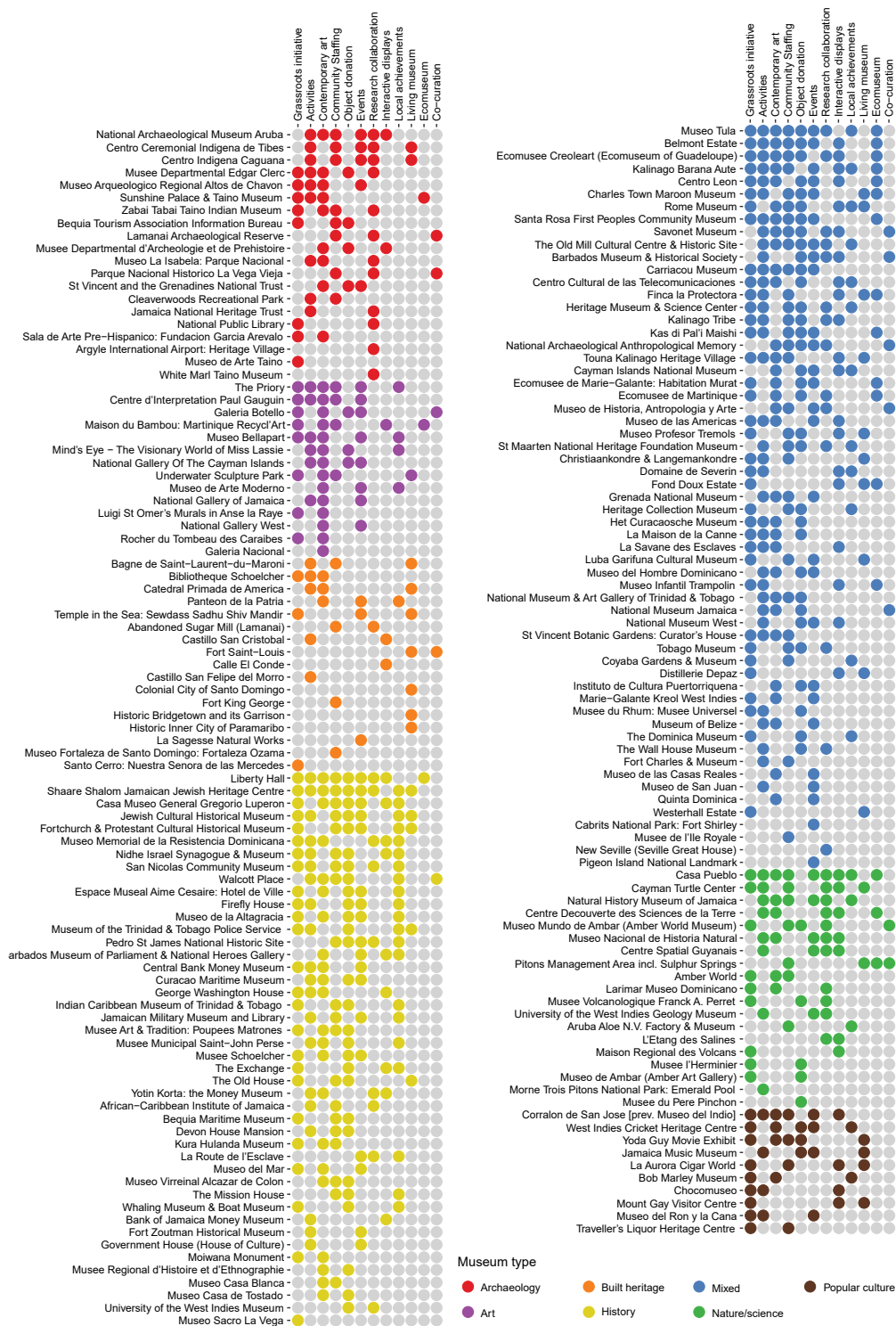
Figure 5: Matrix of the participatory practices per museum, colored by museum type. The museums are sorted by type and then from most to least participatory practices.

preparing clearly defined research questions and a limited amount of variables before entering the field, structuring participatory observation to answer a specific set of questions, rather than observing the community more freely (Bernard 2006: 353). Feasibility also demanded a high level of extant proficiency in the language spoken by the community in question. Along with these four parameters for the selection of case studies, an invitation by the museum and community in question was indispensable. I was determined not to conduct case study research without the explicit consent of the communities involved and made sure that any case study plan was deemed beneficial not only for this research but also for the participating community and museum.

Throughout the course of the regional museum survey, several invitations were received to return to a museum and community for such a case study. However, not all of these invitations aligned with the parameters which had been set, and yet others were not possible within the timeline of the research project. Ultimately, the two case studies which were selected were based in Dominica and in Barbados. In Dominica, in the Kalinago Territory, the case study revolved around the *Kalinago Barana Autê*, a museum which was conceived as a grassroots initiative by the Indigenous Kalinago community, but was ultimately constructed and is currently still owned by the national government, while the daily management of the museum is run by the Kalinago. It showcases an ongoing community engagement project between a national government and a local community. In Barbados, the case study was centered on the *Bengal to Barbados* exhibition project, a co-curated exhibition which was devised by members of the East Indian community in Barbados who reached out to the *Barbados Museum & Historical Society* for their participation. It showcases the beginning of a community engagement project between a national museum and a local community. It bears repeating that the goal of the case studies was to gain an in depth insight into community engagement processes. Considering the wide diversity of Caribbean museums revealed through the regional museum survey, there is no way in which these case studies could be considered representative of Caribbean community engagement processes as a whole. They function as merely two examples on a wide spectrum and do not aspire to be representative or all-encompassing.

The first phase of fieldwork for each case study effectively began during the regional museum survey when the museums in question, the *Kalinago Barana Autê* (KBA) and the *Barbados Museum & Historical Society* (BMHS) were first visited and initial conversations occurred with potential case study participants. Preparation began in earnest afterwards through discussions and meetings with community members and/or museum staff. These discussions were very important for planning the second phase of fieldwork and for collectively developing a research question that this fieldwork would aim to answer. In Dominica, the main aim of the case study research was to assess the value and importance of the KBA for the Kalinago community and to identify how they felt the museum could improve for the future. This topic was deemed important by the management of the KBA as well as political leaders in the community who were looking to alter the operation of the museum and possibly its ownership structure. In Barbados, the main aim of the case study research was to understand the heterogeneity of the East Indian community and the participants' diverse goals for and attitudes towards the exhibition project. This topic was deemed of fundamental importance for the early phase of the co-curation project by both BMHS staff and East Indian

community members who were all not yet certain about the collective aims of the project and how they could best be met.

Practical preparation for the second phase of the case study fieldwork consisted of the development of a survey in the form of a paper-based questionnaire. For both case studies, the surveys had some similarities. The surveys contained ten questions, of which the last three concerned the respondent's age, gender, and an option to leave their contact information for a longer interview. Both surveys also contained questions which asked respondents for positive and negative keywords related to the museum/exhibition project. Similarly, respondents were asked about the importance and perceived or potential benefits of the museum/exhibition. Specifically for the KBA, respondents were asked about visitation of the KBA, as well as for suggestions for improvements. In the case of the Bengal to Barbados exhibition project, respondents were asked questions about their sense of community belonging, as well as their involvement in the project and their desired outcomes of the exhibition. These differences were designed with the collectively developed research questions in mind. The surveys were reviewed and tested by case study participants, and suggestions for alterations were incorporated. These paper-based questionnaires were designed on two pages so that they could fit on a single piece of paper and would not take more than five to ten minutes to complete. This was to ensure a low threshold for participation and to hopefully allow a larger number of responses.

This second phase of fieldwork was conducted in both cases over the course of roughly a month, in July-August 2015 in Dominica and February-March 2016 in Barbados. Administering the survey was a major component of these studies, along with rapid assessment participant observation (Bernard 2006: 352-353). For the former, the aim was to use the street-intercept method: approaching potential survey respondents freely in the street or around their homes, thereby ensuring that all parts of the community could be surveyed in a random pattern (Bernard 2006: 257). For the latter, the key is to already have specific research questions when entering the field, so that answers may be found in a relatively short amount of time. I lived locally during this time, engaging frequently with members of the respective communities and spending time in or working at the museums. Community gatherings, lectures, events, and meetings were attended whenever possible. In addition, interviews were conducted. In the end, 150 surveys were administered in Dominica and 51 in Barbados. Although a similar fieldwork methodology was developed for both case studies, the communities, museums, and settings of each were unique and necessitated a specific approach in the field. These particularities are described in detail in the respective case study chapters.

Collaboration with case study participants was vital for the collection of this micro level data. In Dominica, the efforts of the Development Officer of the Ministry of Kalinago Affairs in planning the case study and a presentation of results, the willingness of the KBA's manager to provide detailed information about the museum, and many members in the community for their openness and hospitality were particularly appreciated. In Barbados, the BMHS director and deputy director were instrumental in assisting in the preparation of the case study and reflecting on its results, as well as for providing a place within the institution for me to work. Three East Indian community members were essential research participants and community gatekeepers, as they distributed surveys to relatives, friends, students, colleagues, and other community

Figure 6: Presenting and discussing survey results, 2016. Left: Kalinago Barana Autê. Right: Barbados Museum & Historical Society.

members. In both Dominica and Barbados, many others provided assistance, in terms of conversation, accommodation, or transportation. Of course, neither of the case studies would have been possible without the 201 respondents who dedicated their time and freely shared their insights.

While in the field, survey data was digitized and the responses were aggregated per question (see *Questionnaire Results: Kalinago Barana Autê*, page 258; *Questionnaire Results: Bengal To Barbados*, page 264). For open ended questions, responses were recorded as originally stated, but also coded and grouped according to categories. This made it possible to compare answers to all of the questions, whether the data was qualitative (*e.g.* why respondents considered the museum important or not) or quantitative (*e.g.* how many times they had visited the museum). Afterwards, descriptive statistical analysis was undertaken of all of the questions, using the answers as variables. In the case of the Bengal to Barbados questionnaire, analysis was consequently also performed by separating the responses of the East Indian respondents from the Barbados Museum & Historical Society staff in order to see whether their surveys were significantly different. These analyses were complemented by the participant observation that had taken place during the entire main phase of the case study fieldwork. By compiling this data, preliminary results were formulated.

The final phase of case study fieldwork consisted of the presentation of results (see figure 6). The preliminary results of the Dominican case study were presented during a special community meeting held at the *Kalinago Barana Autê* in March 2016. All Kalinago present were invited to ask questions about the results as well as confirm whether the results were in line with their own perceptions. While no results were contested, they were accepted as useful information and taken onboard for the future development of the KBA. As part of this presentation, the future of the KBA was discussed in detail and its value for the community and not just for visitors was emphasized in the suggestion for a new mission statement. In addition, the ownership of the KBA was candidly discussed, providing deeper insights into the community's contested views on this matter. Also in March 2016, preliminary results of the Barbadian case

study were presented during a meeting of the Exhibition Planning Committee at the *Barbados Museum & Historical Society*. Again, committee members present were asked for their input and any questions. There was general consensus as to the validity of the results, and a point was made to take on suggestions for the continued development of the exhibition project. Committee members were particularly worried about their representativity and discussed a number of possible solutions to this issue – both in terms of the committee and wider community involvement. In addition, they reflected on their own influence on potential project participants, which led to new awareness of their personal biases. For both case studies, these presentations of preliminary results were very useful, on the one hand to confirm the analysis and interpretations of the data, and on the other hand to provide practical suggestions for how the data could be used by community members and museum staff in the continuation of their community engagement processes.

Research Ethos

Participating in the unmapped territory of engagement zones is risky and has real consequences for the participants, museums, and communities involved.
Bryony Onciul (2013: 93)

As a researcher, participating in engagement zones or in community engagement projects falls into a similar position. A researcher can never be entirely neutral, and their presence can never be without effect or impact on the subject of study. For this research project into community engagement in the Caribbean, I was aware of this risk and took on a research ethos couched in the New Museology and post-colonial theories. This ethos informed the general attitudes, philosophies, and codes of conduct that guided my fieldwork as well as the research project as a whole. From this ethos, I approached this research as an arena for debate, used community engagement approaches, worked self-reflexively, positioned myself as an open-minded outsider, championed accessibility, and employed survey ethics. In all of these matters, I complied with the NEXUS1492 Ethics Code (NEXUS1492 2013) and the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice (VSNU 2004).

Similar to the New Museology which characterizes museums as arenas for debate, I took on a comparable perspective for this research and made sure to welcome input, feedback, and debate throughout the entire course of the project. I made an effort to present the research in all stages to museologists, archaeologists, heritage professionals, and historians, working either in the Caribbean or elsewhere in the world. Partially, this was achieved by presenting at several international conferences per year, and partially by being open about my research while working in the field. To be able to receive feedback on my project was crucial for the development of my research, my thought processes, and to evaluate my interpretations. By asking critical questions at conferences and elsewhere, I was able to draw global museological debates to consider the Caribbean.

Community engagement is not only the topic of this research project, but indeed its approaches also informed my research ethos. Community participation and power

sharing were important aspects which I sought to bring into the execution of the project. Thus, the explicit participation of people in the project was encouraged – not only to develop transdisciplinary research with colleagues, but also to involve Caribbean museum staff and community members into directing the research. Caribbean individuals were asked to recommend museums to include in this study, and in the two case studies intense local participation was welcomed. For this, being able to share power is a key issue, for instance by asking community members to edit survey questions. Community engagement was very important in providing feedback, but also in the developmental stages of the research.

Working self-reflexively is a characteristic of both the New Museology and of post-colonial theories, which urge the researcher to reveal themselves, their biases, and actively work towards countering them. I was strongly aware of my origins as being colonial. I am half Dutch and half Hungarian, having lived most of my life in Europe, with shorter periods of time spent in Australia and the USA. My perspective has been characterized by these cultures and by being a woman. Academically, my studies in archaeology and museology have both been couched in post-modernist lines of thought. Although I was trilingual as a child, and became quadrilingual in the course of my university studies, I could communicate better in some areas of the Caribbean than in others. Awareness of my cultural and colonial background spurred me to a constant evaluation of my role in my research and my own impact. I was purposefully open about my background to research participants and others, and made sure to note that the research project as a whole had received European funding. This awareness helped me to work towards making sure that the outcomes of the research project would be sure to benefit the Caribbean directly. I was acutely aware of the risk of perpetrating colonial power imbalances and exploiting the knowledge and resources of the region for European gain.

With this awareness, I decided to position myself deliberately as an open-minded outsider. Listening was key. This research project was the first to take me to the Caribbean, an area of the world which I had no personal knowledge of beforehand – so I made sure to closely pay attention to those who did know the region and let their knowledge guide mine. Realizing the gaps in my own linguistic proficiencies, I took extra language courses. Even though it was not feasible to gain fluency in all main Caribbean languages – not to mention the creole or patois languages which are widely spoken – I hoped that even a basic proficiency of a language could reduce conversational barriers and at least eliminate the need for interpreters. The reception of my Dutch identity varied throughout the Caribbean. Despite my own concerns, mostly it was met positively – especially my fieldwork during the 2014 World Cup when the Netherlands had impressed football fans throughout the Caribbean. The sensation of being an outsider persisted throughout the whole course of the research project, reminding me of my own identity and ensuring that I kept checking my biases and privileges. Over time, I was able to develop a role as a partial insider in terms of my knowledge of museums in the region, which was institutionalized by my election to the Board of the Museums Association of the Caribbean in 2015. Although I did not consider myself to be the appropriate person for this position, I ultimately accepted as a chance to repatriate, as it were, my knowledge and research to the region.

In this vein, accessibility was an important part of my research ethos. On the one hand, I wanted to be accessible as a researcher. I made sure to share my contact information with people I worked with in the field and worked hard on being personally approachable. On the other hand, it was important that my research results would be accessible. To this end, the dissertation, the online accessible Caribbean Museums Database, and the data are designed and visualized in a way to be readable, usable, and digital. Digital open access is key to ensure that the research can be read in the Caribbean in particular and be of use to people working in Caribbean museums.

Finally, I employed survey ethics to ensure that information was shared on the basis of informed consent. During case study fieldwork, participants were asked for their willingness to participate in the surveys and were free to decline or retract their knowledge. Although survey respondents were generally not anonymous to myself, the digitized survey data is anonymized as are all references to survey responses in this dissertation. Interviews explicitly asked for oral consent, and consent was also solicited separately to approve any audio recording. All information obtained from meetings and (in-)formal interviews is referenced anonymously. More detailed information on how the case studies were conducted in the field is described in Chapters 5 & 6. Photographs within museums were only taken when permission had been granted either orally or in writing. In some cases museums allowed me to take photographs only for personal use and consequently these images have been excluded from publication in the Caribbean Museums Database.